



News Release

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West Nile virus monitoring in 2011 comes to a close *Preventing mosquito bites is key in the fight against West Nile virus*

OLYMPIA — Mosquito and dead bird monitoring and testing for West Nile virus has ended for another season. Although West Nile virus activity was considerably lower than in recent years, it doesn't mean the risk is over for future seasons.

"No human cases were identified this year, but people should be aware that the virus is here and can cause serious illness," said Maryanne Guichard, assistant secretary for the state Department of Health. "Washington residents must continue to be diligent in preventing mosquito bites and reducing mosquito habitat around their homes, especially during mosquito season."

While West Nile virus activity varies from year to year, mosquitoes carrying the virus remain a health threat. In 2011, Washington had five positive mosquito samples — down from 126 positive samples in 2010. There were no human, bird, or horse cases this year. West Nile virus was detected in mosquito samples collected in Franklin, Grant and Yakima counties.

Even though cold weather has reduced the risk of mosquito bites, the state health department encourages residents to take preventive actions that are helpful in the off-season. Dump water that collects around your home in flower pots, wheel barrows, garbage cans and tires. Make sure gutters are cleaned and free of debris. Prevent tarps from holding water when covering firewood, boats, or outdoor furniture. Mosquito larvae can survive the winter, even in freezing conditions, so eliminating mosquito habitat now can help "Fight the Bite" when spring arrives.

[West Nile virus](http://www.doh.wa.gov/wnv) (www.doh.wa.gov/wnv) is spread by infected mosquitoes and can cause illness in people, birds, horses, and other animals. It can make some people very sick. The best way to avoid infection is to prevent mosquito bites and reduce mosquito habitat around your home. Local and state health agencies, mosquito control districts, and others work together to battle West Nile virus in Washington.

West Nile virus season ends

November 17, 2011

Page 2

West Nile virus is [a reportable condition](http://www.doh.wa.gov/notify/nc/wnv.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/notify/nc/wnv.htm) in our state, and details are available on the Department of Health website.

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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